DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 140 240 CS 003 444

AUTHOR Hittleman, Daniel R.
TITLE Adaptive Assessment for Nonacademic Secondary Reading.
PUB DATE May 77
NOTE 15p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Reading Association (22nd, Miami Beach, Florida, May 2-6, 1977)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Applied Reading; Content Reading; *Functional Reading; Miscue Analysis; *Reading Diagnosis; *Reading Instruction; *Reading Skills; Reading Tests; Secondary Education; Student Evaluation

ABSTRACT

Adaptive assessment procedures are a means of determining the quality of a reader's performance in a variety of reading situations and on a variety of written materials. Such procedures are consistent with the idea that there are functional competencies which change with the reading task. Adaptive assessment takes into account that a lack of communication between author and reader may result from the reader's lack of knowledge or strategies for reconstructing the message or from the author's use of a style that is unfamiliar to the reader. Through an analysis of miscues--oral reading responses that deviate from the expected responses--it is possible to examine a reader's ability to reconstruct an author's message. A good way to clarify the idea of functional competency is to examine various types of reading materials encountered by high school students, including narrative writing, expository writing, and job-related reading materials. Job-related reading tasks have their own specific readability factors. To determine a student's ability to read in job-related situtations, a teacher may sample the person's reading of such materials as help-wanted advertisements, application forms, and typical business invoices. (GW)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED140240

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

INTERNATIONAL READING ASSOCIATION
Twenty-second Annual Convention
Miami Beach, Fla.
May 5, 1977

"Adaptive Assessment for Nonacademic Secondary Reading"

Daniel R. Hittleman
Jobs for Youth, Inc.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Daniel R. Hittleman
TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER."

Mailing address: 9 Lisa Drive
Dix Hills, New York 11746

CS003444

ADAPTIVE ASSESSMENT FOR NONACADEMIC SECONDARY READING

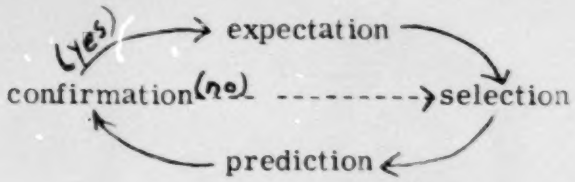
It is not uncommon for secondary reading teachers to use informal assessment procedures to identify students' capabilities and limitations in performing reading tasks. Quite often the Informal Reading Inventory, or the Informal Textbook Test (IRI or ITT), which consists of a so-called graded list of words and paragraphs for oral and silent reading, constitutes the informal assessment instrument. While the concept of informal assessment has validity, the idea that one assessment instrument, or that the use of one reading situation, can be used to determine such things as "instructional" and "independent" and "frustration" levels of performance is not tenable. No one assessment situation will provide complete evidence of a student's ability to read the wide range of expository and non-discourse writing that is dealt with in many daily reading tasks. This is especially true of the use of the IRI with its general story, narrative passages. What is needed is not a singular measure of students' reading performances, but an adaptive means of assessing their reading performances. An adaptive assessment procedure examines reading performances with the particular materials on which one wishes to judge a student's competence.

Functional Competency and Reading

The concept of adaptive assessment is consistent with the current manner in which literacy and the reading process are being defined. For quite a while, literacy was conceived to be a score on a standardized test. As such, anyone scoring "below," say a sixth grade equivalency, was deemed as illiterate. The more recent thinking on this matter is that literacy is functional -- that is, literacy is determined in part by what it is the reader must read. Instead of there being a generalized "level of literacy," there are functional competencies which change with the reading task. The importance and implications of this will be seen as non-academic, and work-related reading tasks are examined.

The concept of functional competency and the current definition of literacy are compatible with the concept of reading as a psycholinguistic process. Within this conceptual framework, reading is an active process by which the reader reconstructs the message of the author. Rather than conceptualizing reading as an aggregate of skills, those adhering to a psycholinguistic model of reading view it as a communicative act not dissimilar from that of listening. A reader enters into a reading act with certain expectations based upon prior experiences and learnings. The printed message is examined, certain information is selected, and the reader makes a prediction about what it is the author has intended. This prediction is either confirmed or not depending upon whether the message "makes sense", that is, whether or not the information processed from the printed page can be reconstructed into a meaningful message. If the message is confirmed (has meaning for the reader),

this information becomes part of the reader's expectations and new information is selected (the reading act continues). If the message is not confirmed (has no or little meaning for the reader), additional information is selected from the printed matter so confirmation can occur. For a proficient reader, the process looks something like this:



It follows then, that difficulties might arise during reading for some individuals because: (a) they lack the necessary experiences and learnings (expectations) to adequately select information and/or to make predictions, or (b) the material being "read" does not meet the expectations the readers possess. An example of the former would be a proficient reading layperson reading a medical journal, and one of the latter would be an author using a syntactical structure or figure of speech that is unusual or uncommon.

Adaptive Assessment

Adaptive assessment is process oriented. It attempts to locate the quality of a reader's performance rather than just a quantification of the number and types of instances in which there is deviation from what the author intended. Adaptive assessment is analytic. It consists of steps an individual takes to continuously answer the questions:

What has been the reader's performance in the past?

What is the reader's performance right now?

What might be expected of the reader in the future?

Of course, these questions must be answered about different types of reading matter, and answers cannot be extrapolated from one type of material to another without some reservations. As two materials increase in dissimilarity of content, format, and style of language, the less one can be used to predict performance on the other.

In the more traditional skill concept of reading, much of what has been said above would be classified as "diagnostic." However, diagnostic teaching, or the idea of "diagnostic-prescriptive" teaching, reflects a medical viewpoint and implies the searching for factors of failure. It implies, when applied to reading instruction, a search mainly for reasons why an individual is not reading well. It seems to exclude assessing a reading performance that is not marked by failure. Adaptive assessment, on the other hand, tries to explain how a message has or has not been reconstructed without necessarily placing "blame" on the reader.

The performance of students' oral reading whether it be of narrative, expository, or work-related reading material, can be assessed through a process oriented procedure known as miscue analysis. A miscue is an actual oral reading response that does not match the expected response, that is, the reader orally produces a message that is not an exact reproductinn of the message on the page. Through an analysis of miscues, it is possible to examine

the readers' abilities to reconstruct authors' messages. It is not the number of miscues that is important to assess but the quality of the miscues. The quality of a miscue is judged by the degree to which it changes the author's intended message (Burke, 1975).

Miscue analyses are made by asking a series of questions about the students' miscues. Three groups of questions are asked about the miscues.

> How effective are the students' strategies for recognizing words in context?
>
> How effective are the students' strategies for using their knowledge of language to realize the author's message?
>
> How much do the students' miscues change the intended meaning of the author?

Although miscue analyis was originally devised to assess students' reading of narrative material, research evidence shows that the same questions are effective in assessing students' reading of expository writing, and the examples below demonstrate its effectiveness in judging students' reading of work-related reading materials.

Reading Materials

A good way to clarify the idea of functional competency is to examine various types of reading tasks encountered by students of high school age. Basically much of their reading is done in prose material. In narrative material a typical passage is:

> Arthur couldn't even see the bottom of the wishing well. It was too full of paper coffee cups, ripped shopping bags, and scum. The water was so dirty he couldn't see his face. He couldn't see Mary' s face either, but he knew she was looking at him by the way she was clutching his jacket at the elbow. (Cambridge, 1972:157-8)

In expository writing, a passage might seem similar on the surface to narrative material, but a major difference between the two is in the organization of ideas. In the expository passage below, the information is organized to show a sequence of ideas.

> Primitive man in the New World was at first a hunter. He wandered over the land in search of rabbits, birds, turtles, and other small animals to eat. He also ate plant foods at times of the year when they grew. Occasionally he was able to kill a deer, or boar, or a bear. He used only a few simple tools and weapons.
>
> After about five thousand years of hunting, man became mainly a collector of plant food. Most of the plants he gathered were wild. He made choppers of stone to help him cut the plants he found. About one thousand years later, he learned to domesticate plants. These plants included corn, two kinds of squash, peas, and beans. He planted seeds and harvested his crop. Farming meant that he had to stay in one place for a certain length of time. Then he began to domesticate animals, starting with the dog.
>
> Man formed his first small settlements. From a hunter, to a plant collector, to a farmenr, early man had now become a member of a small settled community. The beginning of civilization in the New World can be said to have started with the first small settlements. (Cambridge, 1972:12)

The following passage contains two types of organization patterns. The first part of the paragraph contains an enumeration of ideas, and the second half contains a cause/result relationship.

> There are many factors that limit the growth of the rat population in a city. Rats, like people, need three main things to survive: (1) food and water, (2) shelter, and (3) a favorable climate. Rats eat the same kinds of foods that people eat. Uncovered foods and garbage are major sources of rodent food. When these are unavailable, the rats move to another area. Rodents cannot survive in cold, dry climates, and they prefer the heated environment of buildings. If it is difficult to get into buildings in one part of a city, rats will look for more favorable neighborhoods. (Cambridge, 1972:99)

Other types of information organization patterns include: question/answer, comparison/contrast, generalization, and topic development, (Robinson, 1975). The manner in which the information is organized can greatly affect the efficiency with which a reader can reconstruct the author's message. When an organization pattern is unknown by the reader or difficult to detect, a lack of reading comprehension results. Therefore, it is necessary to determine the type of organization pattern being read whenever attempting to assess a reader's ability to understand a message. Naivete on the part of a teacher commonly results in students' abilities being either over or under estimated when organization of ideas are not taken into consideration during assessment.

Job-related reading tasks have their own factors of readability that are not necessarily the same as those of narrative or expository writing. On the next page are three samples of the numerous job-related reading materials confronting many adolescents and young adults. The first represents the directions for an application form. This particular one is for a social security number. Other applications which young people find themselves having to read are job applications, department store credit applications, and loan applications.

SAMPLE WORK-RELATED READING MATERIAL

Information Furnished on This Form is CONFIDENTIAL
INSTRUCTIONS
One Number Is All You Ever Need For Social Security And Tax Purposes
Special Attention Should Be Given To Items Listed Below

Fill in this form completely and correctly. If any information is not known and is unavailable, write "unknown." Use typewriter or print legibly in dark ink.

1. Your social security card will be typed with the name you show in item 1. However, if you want to use the name shown in item 2, attach a signed request to this form.

3. If not born in the USA, enter the name of the country in which you were born.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY
NOW AVAILABLE AT THE
GRAND UNION CO.
3627 Erie Blvd., E. DeWitt, N.Y.
For An
EXPERIENCED BAKER
with management potential and ability

GRAND UNION PROVIDES:
* Free Hospitalization
* Major Medical Insurance
* Free Group Life Insurance Plan
* Retirement Plan

6	dz. # 1 Mongol Pcls.		8.50
100	4153 1/5 Pend.		35.10
5	# 1 Blk stamp pads 1.35		6.75
300	Lt Blue 1/3 cut letter folders	8.95	26.85
3	C - 15 Dup	3.28	9.84
1	747 Stapler		10.95
3	bx Std staples	1.50	4.50
1	# 1385 File		11.25
100	5 x 8 Blank guides		4.00
			117.74
			TxEx

The second sample job-related reading task is an occupation want ad. The sample copy in the ad differs in format and language from the sample application copy. Other ads which young people encounter in job-related reading are telephone directory ads (indicating someone's services for hire) and general consumer ads (indicating a product for sale).

The third sample job-related reading task is from a typical invoice. A perusal of the sample invoice copy shows that the format and language of this material differs greatly from both the application and the ad.

Each of the work-related reading situations requires different reading and thinking strategies than does the reading of narrative expository writing. For example, the task for completing the application requires the following of specific directions. To read the want ad requires the ability to differentiate between information indicating the job requirements and the job benefits. In reading the invoice, the task requires the understanding of abbreviations.

Assessing a Student's Reading

A reader's ability to perform the reading required in each of the job-related reading situations is dependent upon that person having the expectations to make an efficient selection of cues. The only way to determine a reader's ability to read in these situations is to actually sample the persons' reading. On the next page is a portion of the protocol of a 17 year old, out-of-school youth, with a grade equivalency score of 5.8 on the Adult Basic Learning Examination (1967), reading the work-related material. It should be quite

Oral Reading Protocol

Information Furnished on This Form is CONFIDENTIAL

INSTRUCTIONS

One Number is All You Ever Need For Social Security And Tax Purposes

Special Attention Should Be Given To Items Listed Below

Fill in this form completely and correctly. If any information is not known and is unavailable, write "unknown." Use typewriter or print legibly in dark ink.

1. Your social security card will be typed with the name you show in item 1. However, if you want to use the name shown in item 2, attach a signed request to this form.

***

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

NOW AVAILABLE AT THE

GRAND UNION CO.

3627 Erie Blvd., E. DeWitt, N.Y.

For An

EXPERIENCED BAKER -

with management potential and ability

GRAND UNION PROVIDES:

* Free Hospitalization
* Major Medical Insurance -

***

6	dz. #1 Mongol Pcls.		8.50
100	4153 1/5 Pend.		35.10
5	#1 Blk stamp pads	1.35	6.75
300	Lt Blue 1/3 cut letter folders	8.95	26.85
3	C - 15 Dup	3.28	9.84

evident that the young person's proficiency varies with the reading task.

For example, on all the materials, the miscues show a fairly high graphic similarity with the text. Yet, the miscues show that the youth's ability to use language and experiential background for determining the author's message, differs with the reading task, and that the message has not been reconstructed uniformly across all three types of text.

In reading the instructions for a social security number, the youth creates a meaningful sentence by substituting a similar part of speech for the expected text (these/this, shall/should) or by substituting something that is consistant with the prior information in the sentence (print label/print legibly, shown in ink/ shown in item). Where the miscue changed the author's message, corrections were made (shows to shall, tape/type). Questions asked of the youth following the reading indicate that this was considered an application for a tax number. Also, the youth generally understood what to do but did not understand the information about the use of an alternative name.

In reading the text from the want ad, the youth made few miscues that changed the meaning of the message. The words that were unknown were inferred from the other information contained in the ad and from the youth's experience in dealing with the content of other want ads. Where the meaning was substantially changed by the miscues (Era/Eric, Dead wit/ De witt), the youth still new it was an address.

In reading the text from the invoice, the youth could in no way realize the intended message since the material contained few clues that allowed for the reconstruction of a meaningful message. The youth showed, also, a lack

of expectation (prior background information) and an inability to select appropriate information. Also, the language style of the material differed drastically from that which the youth was familiar.

Overall, the want ad was read with the greatest relative understanding and the invoice was read with the least understanding. If this youth were to be sent out for a job in a stationery store, specific instruction to insure a readiness to perform the job-related reading tasks would have to focus on the reading and writing of the special vocabulary and abbreviations used in the trade and the reading of fractions.

Summation

Adaptive assessment is an attempt to determine the quality of a reader's performance in a variety of reading situations and on a variety of written materials. It is consistent with the idea of functional competency in reading as multiple kinds and levels of literacy which are reading task specific. It is difficult to estimate a reader's competency unless that individual's reading is assessed with the particular material that is required to be read. Teachers of reading should make accomodations in their assessment procedures to determine whether a lack of communication between an author and a reader is the result of the reader lacking knowledge and/or strategies for reconstructing the message or of the author using a style or form of language that is unexpected under the circumstances. A reading problem, then, may result from some characteristic of the reading material and not from a factor of the reader's level of ability.

REFERENCES

Adult Basic Learning Examination. 1967. New York : Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Burke, Carolyn. 1975. " Oral Reading Analysis: A View of the Reading Process." In William D. Page, Ed. Help for the Readint Teacher: New Directories in Research, Urbana, IL. : NCTE and ERIC / RCS.

Cambridge Skill Power Series: Skills in Reading 1. 1972. New York: Cambridge Book.

Robinson, H. Alan. 1975. Reading and Study Strategies: The Content Areas. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.